UNITED NATIONS

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General Assembly

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A/C.3/51/1
20 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
THIRD COMMITTEE

ALLOCATION OF ITEMS TO THE THIRD COMMITTEE

Letter dated 20 September 1996 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chairman of the Third Committee

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the decisions taken by the fifty-first session of the General Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting pertaining to the allocation of items to the Third Committee.

I wish to draw your attention to the recommendations on the organization of the session contained in section II of the report of the General Committee (A/51/250). Those recommendations were approved by the General Assembly also at its 3rd plenary meeting.

May I also draw your attention to paragraph 38 of section IV and to the relevant part of paragraph 44 of section V of the report concerning the agenda of the Main Committees.

I earnestly request your cooperation in these matters.

(Signed) Razali ISMAIL

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ANNEX

Allocation of items to the Third Committee

1. Report of the Economic and Social Council [chapters I to IV, V (sections A and E) and VII] (item 12).

[The General Assembly decided that the chapters of the report listed below would be referred also to plenary meetings and to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Second and Fifth Committees, as follows:

(a)	Chapters I and VII	Plenary meetings and Second and Fifth Committees
(b)	Chapter II	Plenary meetings
(c)	Chapters III and IV	Plenary meetings and Second Committee
(d)	Chapter V (section A)	Plenary meetings and Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)
(e)	Chapter V (section E)	Second and Fifth Committees]

2. Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (item 100).

3. Crime prevention and criminal justice (item 101).

4. International drug control (item 102).

5. Advancement of women (item 103).

[The General Assembly decided that the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on the operations, management and budget of the United Nations Development Fund for Women should be referred to the Second Committee for consideration under item 98 (Operational activities for development).]

6. Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (item 104).

7. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (item 105).

8. Promotion and protection of the rights of children (item 106).

[The General Assembly decided that the report of the Secretary-General on the progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256), which is relevant to item 98 (Operational activities for development) and to item 106 should be introduced in plenary and referred also to the Third Committee for consideration under item 106.]

9. Programme of activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (item 107).

10. Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (item 108).

11. Right of peoples to self-determination (item 109).

12. Human rights questions (item 110):

(a) Implementation of human rights instruments;

(b) Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives;

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action;

(e) Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

13. Question of elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime (item 158).

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Fifty-first session
THIRD COMMITTEE

Letter dated 6 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the Chairman of the Third Committee

Judging from the numerous examples that have been brought to the attention of the Committee on Conferences, it would appear that many intergovernmental bodies are under the impression that conference-servicing resources are abundant if not unlimited, to draw a parallel with natural resources. In fact, the demand for services continues to grow even as the Organization endeavours to cut back in response to the increasingly severe financial constraints it is experiencing.

Conference-servicing resources are the fuel that keep the Organization's parliamentary machinery running smoothly. However, there is a price to pay for these services. At Headquarters, the notional cost of a single page of documentation in the six official languages is $916, of which $602 stems from translation; the notional cost of one meeting is $4,553, of which $4,194 stems from interpretation. Several years ago, the Committee on Conferences set a benchmark figure of 80 per cent for utilization of allocated conference resources. In 1995, overall utilization at Headquarters, Geneva and Vienna was down to 76 per cent, owing to late starting and early ending of meetings and sessions and repeated cancellation of meetings. Here is another eye-opening figure: if the start of every meeting in New York during a calendar year were delayed 10 minutes, the loss in unutilized conference-servicing resources would amount to around $875,000.

Fortunately, there are common-sense solutions to conserve resources. As a first step, bodies could review their needs with a view to rationalizing requests for services. As for tactics to save time, experience shows that the Chairman's presence in the Conference Room sets an example for other delegates to arrive punctually; full use of meeting time could be ensured if meetings were convened only when an adequate number of speakers are inscribed on the list and if several items were placed on the agenda; sessions could possibly be shortened if a time limit for speakers were set. During the planning stage, arrangements could be made to dovetail brief sessional meetings with those of a body's

regional groups or other bodies meeting on an "as available" basis; and if Conference Services is informed at least a day in advance of a cancellation, the resources thus released can be "recycled" to other groups.

But the conference room is not the only front on which the campaign for improved utilization must be waged. There are also mountains of documentation to be attacked and reduced. Here again, several action-oriented manoeuvres could be carried out: bodies could review their recurrent documentation and eliminate what they deem to be unnecessary; some reports could be considered on a biennial or triennial basis; agenda items could be merged and reports consolidated accordingly; bodies could request oral reports rather than written ones and more important still, they could exercise restraint in making proposals containing requests for new reports.

Clearly, intergovernmental bodies are responsible for ensuring rational utilization of conference-servicing resources. The key to the success of this operation to conserve limited resources is the will to redouble efforts so as to reverse a critical situation. I trust we can count on your cooperation in this common cause.

(Signed) El Hassane ZAHID
Chairman
Committee on Conferences